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Serving Students: The Legacy of Milner's Library

Milner Library Exhibits

2018

Slide deck 04: Cook Hall (4 panels)

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COOK HALL

1898–1914

- › Cost of construction for Cook Hall: \$76,000
- › Open 44 hours/week (including Saturdays)
- › Supported 800 ISNU students
- › Employed 3 librarians/staff





View of Cook Hall as it was under construction, ~1897. The gingko tree appearing on the right side of the image still remains.

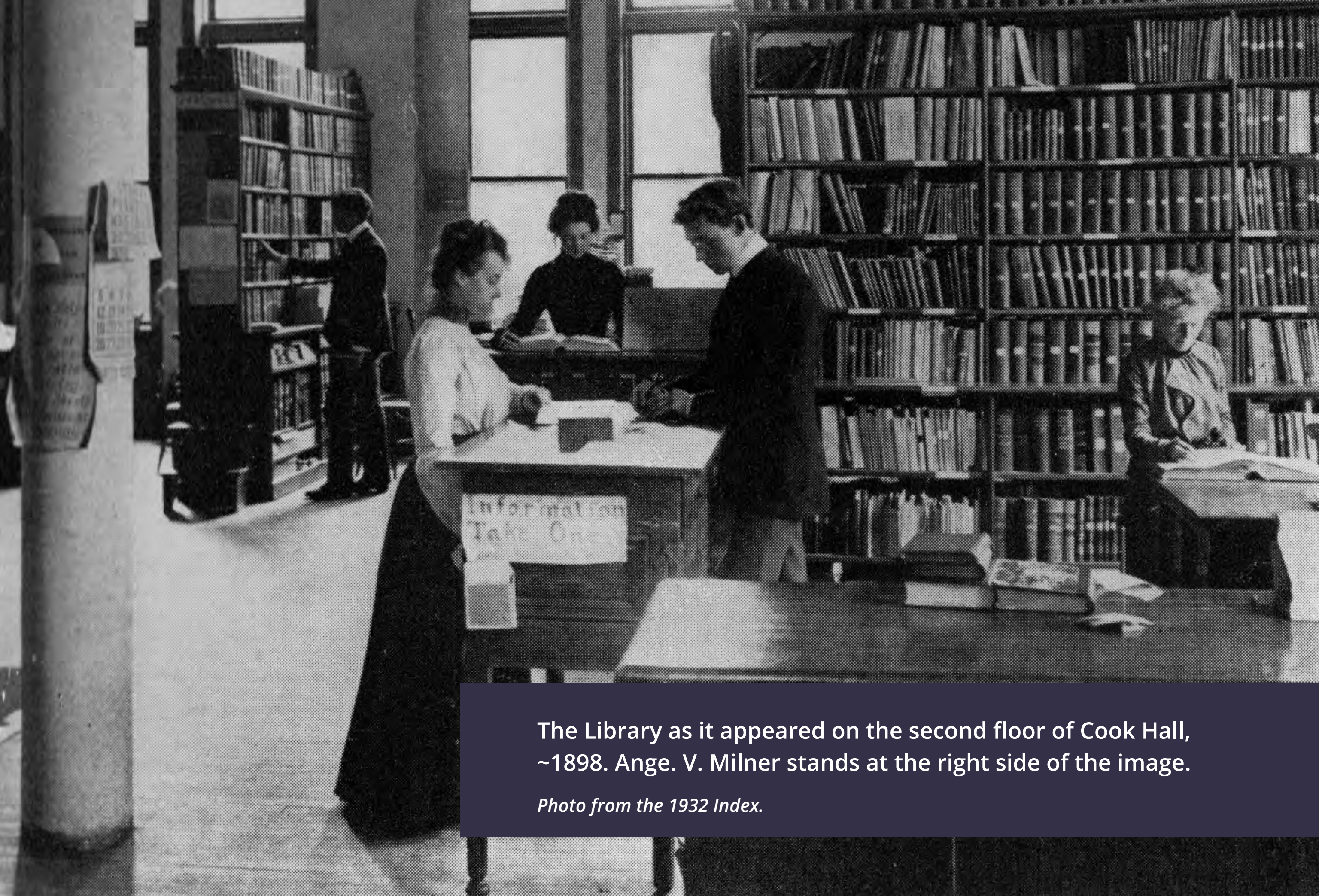
Photo courtesy of the McLean County Museum of History, Bloomington, Illinois.

From Commodious to Cramped

Cook Hall was built in 1898 to serve the dual purposes of the gymnasium (as the building was referred to at the time) and the library. The library was a single room (49'x90') located on the second floor above the gym. The new space was described as "splendid" and "spacious."

Modern Conveniences

Electricity was one of the modern conveniences enjoyed in Cook Hall. Unfortunately, funds had not been appropriated for light fixtures and Milner was forced to close the library at 4 pm each evening until money could be saved to purchase lights. Three years after moving into Cook Hall, in 1901, funding for lighting fixtures (as well as for a desk for Milner and a book truck) was provided.



The Library as it appeared on the second floor of Cook Hall, ~1898. Ange. V. Milner stands at the right side of the image.

Photo from the 1932 Index.

New Services

Ange V. Milner held an active interest in materials of any format that could be beneficial to students. In 1901, Milner began a circulating collection of more than 1000 mounted pictures and slides. Viewing herself as more than a caretaker of books, Milner supported experiential learning in the library. With wires strung across the library's ceiling, she hung curated exhibits of pictures, photographs, posters, and maps. Using technology of the era, she projected images onto screens via lantern slides, stereopticons, stereographs, and reflectoscopes. She invited the campus and community into the library to view microscopes, terrariums and even a hornet's nest, to help showcase student work conducted in courses.



Advancing Instruction

The evolution of Milner's instruction continued in 1912 when she began teaching a ten-lesson library course. It would eventually be required of all students. Active learning or "active work," constituted in laboratory practice was an essential component of each library lesson. Milner extended library hours to include four hours on Saturdays to better accommodate her teaching demands. Her instruction program was sophisticated for the time and cited nationally as "the strongest continuous influence [that] has been exerted in the state of Illinois." Her 1899 article, "Instruction in Use of Catalogs and Reference Books in Normal Schools," became recommended reading in Kroeger's *Guide to the Study and Use of Reference Books*. In 1906, her instruction program was praised as a model by the National Education Association.

By 1913, the collection had grown to 23,000 volumes. Since 1910, Milner had resorted to storing books "seldom needed" in Cook Hall's attic. It was no longer the "commodious quarters" described in 1898 but "congested" and "cramped." Milner also felt Cook Hall was too far removed from student classrooms in Old Main and the library should not reside one floor above balls bouncing below in the gymnasium.

Cook Hall as it can be seen today.